

## **Aquatic Park Stop**

### **#7 Global Climate Change in the National Parks**

The only constant in life is change. How many times have you heard that adage? The waterfront landscape before you is no exception. Aquatic Park, part of San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, represents a mix of natural and cultural processes.

Historic ships like our *Balclutha* brought thousands to San Francisco more than a hundred years ago. A growing population created demand for more land. The shoreline that you see is not original. It changed over time as part of the Bay was filled, and new land was created.

Notice Hyde Street to the south. You may see historic cable cars hauling passengers along the precipitous incline. These hills were pristine sand dunes plunging to a shoreline that was once a half block south of you.

Stroll east along Jefferson Street and Fisherman's Wharf, past Powell Street, and imagine what's under your feet. Old ships, abandoned by crews eager for a new life on shore, were used as landfill.

More change is likely, and far less benign, as global climate change may further alter the coastline. According the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, "Earth's climate is changing, with global temperature now rising at a rate unprecedented in the experience of modern human society."

Polar ice caps are melting quickly, as are mountain glaciers. As ice melts, sea level rises. Where you are standing could be many feet under water in 50 years!

Much can be done to mitigate warming temperatures by making changes now. This park is among many taking the lead in energy conservation through steps such as solar energy production, use of electric vehicles, and major recycling efforts. We encourage individuals like you to make energy conservation choices at home every day.

National parks represent a link between our past, our present, and our future by telling the story of our nation's heritage. As such, national parks chronicle change.

As Park Manager John Morris explains, "Many times during our nation's history, citizens have confronted difficult circumstances, and found creative solutions. Our parks tell [these] compelling stories...In the future national parks may tell the story of our collective success is dealing with climate change, and moving to a way of life in greater harmony with the natural processes that operate on our planet."

